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UNCLAS UNVIE VIENNA 000478

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: FRIENDS OF AFGHANISTAN TAKES SHAPE IN PREPARATORY MEETING

REF: STATE 091864

¶1. (U) Representatives from Afghanistan, France, Italy, U.K., and U.S. met at the Italian mission in Vienna on August 27 to discuss the structure and format of the proposed "Friends of Afghanistan" group. Charge delivered guidance points from reftel, which were well received across the board.

¶2. (U) All participants agreed with our position that the Friends should be an informal forum with no secretariat or rotating officers, and all accepted the membership of Sweden, given its role as co-chair of the Working Group on Finance and Governance and status as a Major Donor.

¶3. (SBU) Afghanistan Charge Wahid Monawar noted his desire to limit membership to major donors and troop-contributing countries. The U.K. agreed that initial discussions should focus on supply reduction, but wants to leave the door open to discuss demand reduction and other issues as needed in future sessions. France again pressed to expand the scope of the group's discussions beyond UNODC to the activities of other Vienna-based organizations active in Afghanistan, but their proposal was not accepted by the others. All agreed that the involvement of Russia would be a distraction at this stage.

¶4. (U) Italy was tasked to develop a short terms of reference to be shared with others in the group. The first meeting of the Friends of Afghanistan will take place on Sept. 17 at the UN with participation by UNODC Executive Director Costa.

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